

A **TRUE** BOOK



The Virginia Colony



Patrick Henry famously
said, "Give me Liberty,
or give me Death."

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MCCHOLASTIC

Timeline of Virginia Colony History

Around 10,000 B.C.E.

Native peoples inhabit present-day Virginia.



1607

The colony of Jamestown is founded.



1781

The British surrender at Yorktown.



1788

Virginia approves the U.S. Constitution.





Virginia's Native Americans

The area that became Virginia was home to many Native American peoples in the early 1600s. Inland groups included the Monacan and Tutelo. The Catawba and Cheroenhaka lived to the south and northwest. The Nanticoke and the Powhatan lived closer to the Atlantic Coast. They spoke Algonquian languages. These languages were related to those spoken by peoples who lived in what we now call New England.

The Powhatan and other Virginia Algonquian peoples lived in villages built near farm fields. Families lived in longhouses. Longhouses were tunnel-shaped buildings made of mats of bark or woven reeds placed over a wooden frame. The women cared for the longhouse. They also cared for the maize (corn), beans, and squash that were grown in the fields. They gathered wild plants such as berries in warm weather. Women also treated animal skins. The skins were made into clothing.

Corn was an important crop for many of America's native peoples.



The earliest native people arrived in Virginia between 10,000 and 12,000 years ago.





Spear fishing took a great deal of skill and practice.

Men hunted deer and turkeys with bows. Fathers taught their sons hunting skills. Young boys practiced hunting small animals. Young girls helped their mothers. Natives living along rivers or coasts fished with short spears, nets, and wooden traps. Many peoples fished from canoes made of hollowed-out tree trunks. Oysters and clams were also food sources for the natives.



The Settlers

Native Americans living near the Blue Ridge Mountains may have encountered Europeans in the early 1540s. Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto passed through the region at that time in search of gold. Peoples further east, in the Powhatan **Confederacy**, met a different group of Spaniards who took away a Powhatan boy. It is likely that some heard rumors of English settlements set up on the North Carolina coast in the 1580s.

← Hernando de Soto was the first European to see the Mississippi River.



The early settlers came to Virginia to make money.

The Virginia Company

King James I of England gave the Virginia Company permission to start a colony in North America in 1606. The settlers of the colony were part of the company. Their job would be to search for gold and to farm, cut lumber, or do whatever work the company considered important. The Virginia Company's goal was to make money. The settlers would receive a share of the company's profits in return for their work.

A Miserable Adventure

The Virginia Company sent three ships from England with settlers to begin the new colony. All 104 settlers were male. They arrived on the eastern coast of North America and sailed 60 miles (97 kilometers) up the waterway they named the James River. The settlers built a fort that would become the colony of Jamestown in 1607. Two years of misery followed. The unhealthy water at the site sickened and killed many colonists. Disease-carrying mosquitoes swarmed in summer.

Just over a hundred colonists helped to build Jamestown.

Jamestown was the first permanent colony the English built in North America.



Many of the men in the group belonged to wealthy families. They had joined to find gold. They tried and failed to grow corn. They had to rely on local Native Americans for food. But the colonists threatened and attacked the native people instead of dealing with them fairly. The colony's leader was John Smith. The tense relationship with the natives was eased somewhat when settler Smith began to trade with them.

John Smith helped make peace with the native people.



Pocahontas later married another Englishman named John Rolfe.



Pocahontas' actions helped to keep peace between the colonists and the natives.



The Powhatan Confederacy

Many Native Americans belonged to the Powhatan Confederacy. This powerful group of about 30 Algonquian peoples numbered between 14,000 and 24,000 people. Smith met a young Powhatan woman named Pocahontas on a trading journey in 1607. Legend says she saved his life. This began a very brief period of peace between the native people and the settlers. Smith returned to England in 1609 when he injured his leg. The colony's population numbered about 500 to 600 people at the time.

The state of Delaware
is named after
De La Warr.



Lord De La Warr

Jamestown's second
year was as bad as
the first. The Powhatan
trapped the settlers inside
their fort after they attacked
the Indians for food. The

**De La Warr arrived in
Jamestown on June 10, 1610.**

settlers spent the winter starving and freezing.
Only 60 of them remained alive when a new leader
arrived with more colonists in the spring. The leader
was named Lord De La Warr. His strict rules forbade
misbehavior and forced everyone to work. Life at
Jamestown remained challenging. But the colony
began to grow.

Tobacco

The Virginia Company had yet to make a profit. The Native Americans had no gold. The settlers kept dying. But colonist John Rolfe brought tobacco seeds from the Caribbean in 1612. The company finally had a way of making money. Jamestown shipped 2,500 pounds (1,135 kilograms) of tobacco to England a few years later. Rolfe married Pocahontas in 1614. This brought another short peace between the English and the Powhatan.

Tobacco became an important crop for the Jamestown settlers.



New Way of Government

The Virginia Company faced pressure to make profits. It changed some of its rules in 1619. It allowed settlers to own land. This meant farmers actually worked for themselves. It also put a **legislature** called the General Assembly in charge. The assembly consisted of a governor and his council chosen by the company. It also included a House of Burgesses with representatives elected by the colonists. Only white males who owned land could vote.

The new government excluded everyone except for white, land-owning men.

There were 22 members of the original Virginia House of Burgesses.

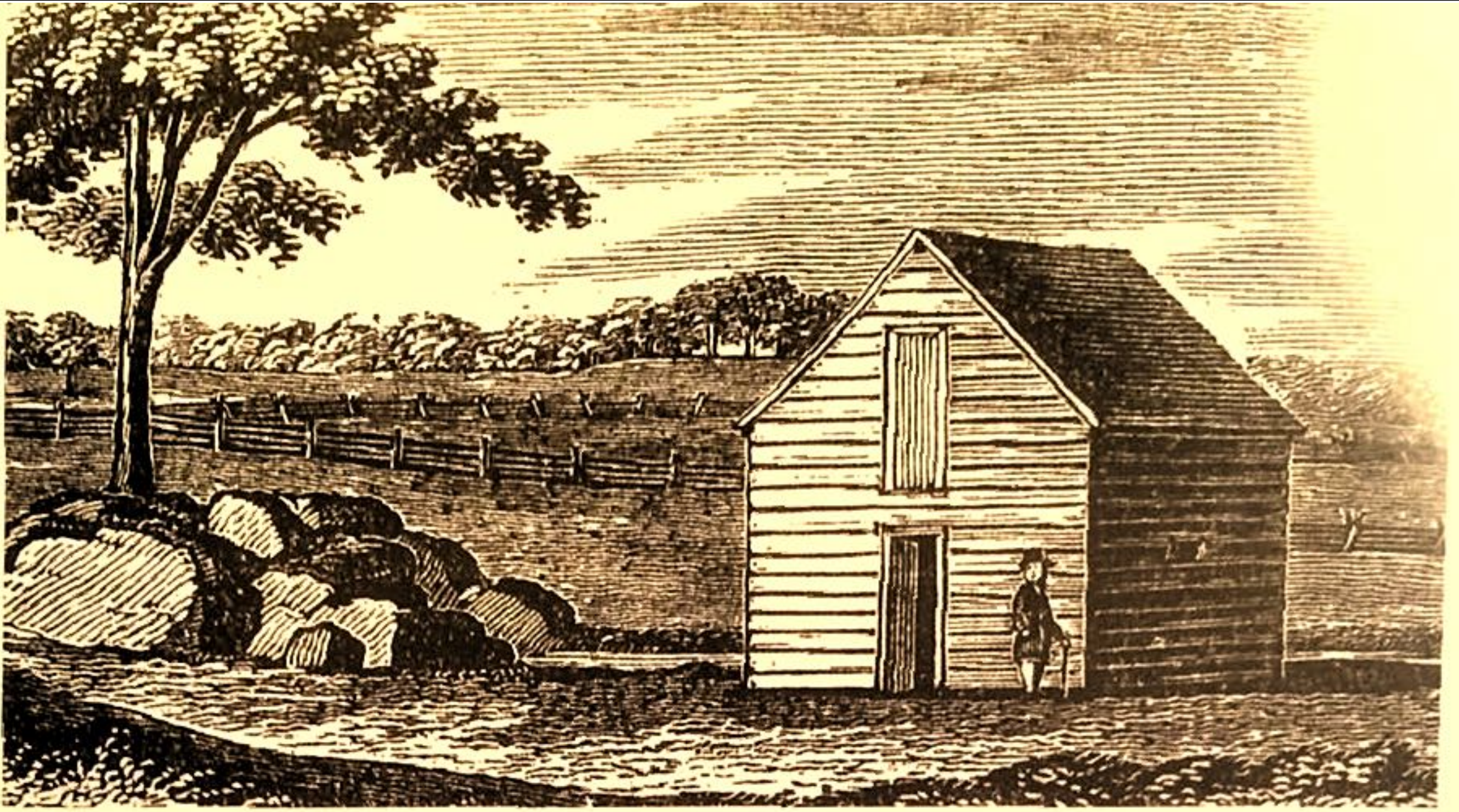




Living in Virginia

Many settlers came to the colony from Europe as **indentured servants** during the 1600s. Indentured servants worked several years in return for an employer paying their way to the colony. The servants were then free to buy their own land to farm. A few became skilled tradesmen who started businesses or worked on plantations. Female indentured servants often got married after they had served their time.

← Possibly half of all white settlers in the early colonies were indentured servants.



Farmhouses were often small and simple, especially on the frontier.

Plowing and Planting

The first farmers in a region cleared the land of trees and built log cabins to live in. They built wooden houses as the land became more settled. Stone houses were common in German areas. Men worked in the fields plowing the soil and planting crops, such as maize and tobacco. Many families raised pigs and chickens to add meat to the family diet. Frontier men and their sons also hunted deer, rabbit, and squirrel.

Women at Work

Women on a farm cared for small children, prepared food, made and mended clothes, and tended gardens. Virginia had few doctors. Women usually cared for the sick and injured with remedies they made from herbs, roots, and bark. Frontier women also learned how to handle firearms. They sometimes had to use the guns during attacks by Native Americans or wild animals.

Some colonial women were married by the time they were 14 years old.

Women protected their homes when men were away.




Childhood

Children of wealthy plantation owners often had private teachers. But children on small farms and frontier farms rarely learned reading and writing unless taught by one of their parents. Children spent their time helping with the long list of chores necessary to run the farm. They sometimes played with other children at gatherings with nearby farm families.



Colonial parents relied on their children to help with chores.

Between 1640
and 1704, 
the number of
black slaves in
Virginia grew
from about 150
to 10,000.



Slavery became a major part of Virginia's economy during the 17th century.

Slave Life

Virginians began to use slave labor in 1619. These first slaves were brought by the Dutch from Africa. Many did not remain enslaved for life. They were given tools and land along with their freedom after a period of time. The system changed as English ships brought enslaved Africans to Virginia. Laws made these people slaves for their entire lives. An owner could mistreat them or sell them for any reason. The children of enslaved people were also enslaved.